

THE ²
OLD PROTESTANT
HIS
Consciencious Queries
ABOUT THE
NEW ENGAGEMENT

O R,
The Engagement Examined, as to the Sense of it, the
Equity, Necessity or Expediency of pressing it, the
Lawfulness of taking it.

By one whose desire is

To endeavour in all things the good of all:
Yet to doe no evil that good may come.

To be carefull to render to every man his due:
Yet curious in giving to any what is anothers.

To yield to any man in things lawfull:
Yet to subscribe to no man in things unlawfull.

Not to be hasty in uttering any thing before God:
Yet, having sworn to his own hurt, not to change.

PROV. 1. 17.

Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.

WHether they who are the present Power of this Nation, be in conscience and equity bound, or in prudence necessitated thus earnestly to press and enforce the Engagement? *Quest. 1.*

Whether the people of this Nation be not bound in conscience to refuse this Engagement? *Quest. 2.*

In case the former of these Queries be resolved in the negative, and the latter in the affirmative, whether they in power deal conscienciously and prudently in enforcing it, or the people in making such haste to take it, while they doe needlessly and unconscionably exact, and these do headily give that which conscience tels the one they are

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are not bound to ask, and the other they are not bound to give?

Quest. 4. In case the two former Queries should prove only disputable, and remain controverted among men judicious and consciencious.

1. Whether they in power are not bound in conscience, equity and prudence, to desist enforcing that which being in it self disputable, indifferent and arbitrary, they finde so highly offensive to multitudes of their truly consciencious, pious, and peaceable (though dissenting) brethren?

2. Whether the people be not bound in conscience to refuse, or at least to suspend, until the matter being debated, they shall receive full and punctuall satisfaction?

For the clearing of the two former, I shall propound some other emergent queries and considerations: Resuming therefore my first query,

I propound to be considered, The Persons requiring, The Persons required to engage, and the Engagement it self.

And first, for the persons pressing this Engagement, whether they are not themselves most of them such as have taken the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance wherein they have sworn [*To bear faith and true Allegiance to his Majesty, his heirs and successors, and him and them to defend to the utmost of their power against all conspiracies and attempts whatsoever which shall be against his or their Persons, Crown or dignity*] And again [*To bear faith and true Allegiance to the Kings Highnesse, his Lawfull successors, and to their power to assist and defend all jurisdictions, privileges, and preheminences, and Authorities granted to the Kings Highnesse, &c.*] such as have taken the Protestation of May 5. 1641. wherein they [*promise, vow and protest to maintain and defend as far as lawfully they may, with their life, power and estate, according to their duty and Allegiance, his Majesties royal Person and Estate, as also the Priviledges and Power of Parliaments, the lawfull Rights and Liberties of the Subject, &c. And to their power, and as far as lawfully they may, to oppose and by all good means and waies to endeavour to bring to condign punishment all such as shall either by force, practice, counsell, plots, conspiracies, or otherwise do any thing to the contrary of any thing in this Protestation, contained*] such as have also taken the Covenant, entituled [*Englands and Scotlands Covenant with their God*] intended [*as a hedge or wall to keep their back sliding hearts from going back*] wherein they have with their hand lifted up to the high God, engaged [*in their places and callings sincerely, really and constantly to endeavour the preservation of the Rights and Priviledges of Parliament, the Liberties of the Kingdom, the defence of his Majesties Person and Authority, (and that so) as the world may bear witness with their consciences, that they had no thoughts or intentions to diminish his just power and greatnesse; The discovery of evil instruments kindring reformation, dividing the King from his people, or one Kingdom from the other, &c. not suffering themselves directly or indirectly by whatsoever combination, perswasion or terror, to be divided and withdrawn from this blessed union, either by making defection to any contrary party, or by giving up themselves to a detestable indifferency or neutrality, in a cause so much concerning the glory of God and honour of the King, &c. But all their daies zealously and constantly promoting the same, according to their power, against all opposition and impediments whatsoever.*] Whether in the apprehensions of most, and in truth, they themselves do not still stand bound according to the purport and intent of all these obligations, as they were then taken, to pursue those ends, and in order thereunto to endeavour the preservation of the Liberties of the Subject, which notwithstanding fair pretences may seem to have met with an Act of oblivion, the Priviledges of Parliament, which are wholly violated, and (were it not now too late) the welfare of the King whom they have destroyed, and of his posterity whom they have destinated to the same fate, so as they should have manifested to the world, that they intended not to diminish his just power and greatnesse, which world, it's to be feared, doth now conclude that they had no other intentions but to ruine him and his; still bound to receive in, and what in in them lieth, to protect the Lords and Commons, whom for the present they exclude, to vindicate

vindicate the Houses from the power of the sword, to command those whom they now obey, to set up the Government of King, Lords and Commons, which they have thrown down, to undo, in what may be, whatsoever they have done, either destructive to the ancient Government, and known Laws, or otherwise contrary to their Oaths and Covenants, to bring to condign punishment those that have divided between the King and the people, as also those who have by force, practice, counsel, plots or conspiracies, done any thing contrary to the Oath of Allegiance, the Protestation and Covenant, and with their lives, power and estates to maintain and defend every person, that hath taken the Protestation and Covenant aforesaid, in whatsoever he shall do in lawfull pursuance of the same?

2. For the persons required to Engage, Whether they are not most of them men tyed by all or some of these sacred and solemn ties; and so in the sight of God, the apprehension of the world, and their own consciences, bound to the pursuance of the same according to their places and power respectively; according to what is at large recited in the immediately foregoing paragraph? (to which, to avoid a tedious recital, I referre them) and these to adhere unto, in the true and genuine sense in which they took them, all the daies of their lives?

In the 3^d place comes the Engagement it self to be enquired into, which I shall doe in a few words; beginning first with the termes, *Common-wealth as it is now established, &c.* Concerning which, the Question is,

Whether by it be not meant, That Government (though unto many who must take this Engagement unknown) which under the force of the Army is set up and managed by a few of the house of Commons (such as Col. Pride thought fit to leave, or they have since admitted) such as is established in the Sovereignty of the Sword, the will of the Soldier, the thraldome of the Houses, the bondage of the Subject, the death of the King, the ruine of his Posterity, the ejection of the Lords, and of as many of the Commons as a prevailing party of the Army did, doth, or shall think fit?

Next, for these words, *True and Faithfull*: Whether to be true and faithfull to a Common-wealth or State, doth not directly inferre and necessarily include Praying, Preaching, Pleading, and contending to the hazzard of Life and Estate for this Government against all other Governments and Governours whatsoever; in particular against the Kings Posterity, against the House of Lords, against the Commons that already are ejected, or possibly hereafter may be ejected, though ever so forcibly and wrongfully, in a word against that ancient, tried, and known good and desirable Government of King, Lords and Commons? For I would fain know, whether being true and faithfull to a State, doth include any lesse then what is fore-mentioned; and particularly whether this State will account that man true and faithfull unto them, who in his place according to power and opportunity doth not or shall not doe all th^{at} se for them? If lesse be meant in the words, and lesse will content them, I conceive under favour, it were expedient they would declare it.

Now if this be the sense of the Engagement, and these be the obligations of those that require, and of those that are required to engage, It is easie to every capacity and conscience not pre-engaged, to make answer to the first query, *viz.* Whether they who are the present Power of this Nation, be in conscience and equity bound, or in prudence necessitated (for indeed there can be no prudence, and must be no necessity against equity and conscience) thus earnestly to presse and enforce the Engagement.

But for that its the usuall answer (though I could never yet see it made good) that all those obligations cease to binde either them or others, I shall yet for the further clearing this query propound these following queries. And first as to that of their being bound in conscience and equity.

1. Whether there be any law of God or man doth binde them to it, unlesse that of their

own making, and therefore in their own power to repeal. As for that which may be pretended, that the law of nature doth direct them to seek their own preservation and establishment; They will themselves grant that its only depraved nature which puts men upon unlawfull waies of self-preservation and self-establishment.

2. If there be then on the peoples part much cause of scruple and refusall, and if they in Power be no otherwise tied then by their own resolutions, whether is it agreeable to Christian Religion, rectified reason, common equity or charity: or is it a thing becoming Christians who are to deny themselves, to seek not their own but others wealth, that is, welfare; in things indifferent to become all things to all men, to be gentle, tender-hearted, pittifull, with all lowlinesse and meeknesse, and long-suffering, to forbear one another in love, &c. Or Christian Magistrates who are to be nursing fathers, good shepherds, not to have their hearts lifted up above their brethren, &c. Or lastly those who have profest nothing more then to have regard to tender consciences, thus to continue urging and pressing with threats and menaces of the highest nature this Engagement upon those men who (being men of known and approved fidelity) are ready to take their oaths in the presence of Almighty God, before them and the world, that they upon no other grounds doe refuse it, but because it is against their consciences? Whether this be not in good earnest a bringing men up to their measure, a bearing rule with rigour, a Lording it over the Lords heritage, a setting up thrones in mens consciences: things which heretofore none dreaded more then those who are now most active with and for them? Liberty of conscience, what's become of thee now? or else is this it, for some men to doe what they please?

3. Whether this be not very hard dealing, to disinherite their Brethren of their birthright, viz. the benefit of the Law of the Land, and by out-lawing them, to expose them to the fraud of all men, and all this because in some things they dissent from them, and having gone as farre as they can, are willing to sit down quiet, and though they would not have them go on, yet they doe not hinder them, but if they do call upon them some time, and minde them of the danger which is before them, yet they do it out of the tender respect they bear unto their welfare? whether, I say, is not this extream, and again I say, extream dealing? We will suppose a ship bound for the West-Indies, the Mariners, Passengers and Souldiers artticleing mutually to assist each other in the voyage all in their places. The most considerable part of these conceiving the Master, and some others acting at his beck, to steer a wrong course, do enter into an Engagement of opposing and restraining him and his party, and to be assistant to each other herein, that so they may indeed arrive, both Master and they, where they all pretend, yet so as they enter into speciall obligations, making withall severall protestations and declarations to God, Angels, and men, that by this restraint and opposition they do intend, and with the hazzard of their lives and fortunes will endeavour in, the preservation of the ship to the place appointed, the safety, yea the freedom and honour of the Master, so that all men who see or hear of the accident, shall be constrained to say that these men in thus doing had no other thoughts or intentions but the preservation and welfare of the Master in this forcible preservation of the ship. Well, after much opposition, one party tugging this way, the other hauling that way, after many stormes and feared wracks the Covenanting party prevaille, and being in the judgement of the Mariners, with whom they entrusted the guidance of the ship, and in the apprehensions, not only of the generality, but of the most experienced of the passengers in sight of the haven, the Master and they likely to agree upon termes of safety, and now ready to thrust in for the long desired Haven: The Souldiers with some few of the Mariners, and an unconsiderable party of the passengers, upon some speciall impulse, and pretended apprehension of danger, either as if that were not the place they were bound for, or as if the Master would for the faithfull service they had done, have for ever an evil eye upon them (though they and their party had by consent distanced

disarmed him and his) binde and threaten to throw over-board, or set a shoar as many of the Marriners as they conceive might oppose them, fall foul upon the Master (who now thought they had been all friends) take off his head, throw him and his children over-board, fear about as the rest conceive for *Tunis* or *Algeire*, and not contented that the dissenting party should promise peaceable demeanour towards them while they go on in these their violent courses, and to act whatsoever lawfully they may upon known principles of equity and safety, for the common preservation of the ship, but will constrain them contrary not only to their inclinations, but consciences also, to comply with, justifie, and act for them in the very pursuance of these their crosse enterprises, otherwise they threaten to deprive them the common benefit of that ship, in which before this force, they had, and still of right have more interest then themselves; and either will throw them over-board, or else set them a shoar unarmed among savages and brutes.

4. Whether is not this in sight a way to out-law, and so to deprive, undoe and ruine, and drive out of this Kingdome, many of as holy, humble, peaceable, faithfull, learned, judicious and conscientious men as any are in the Kingdome: in all things else, they themselves being judges, blamelesse and without exception. A means to suspend, and ruine more faithfull, able and conscientious Ministers, with their families, then ever were suspended and ruined by the tyranny of all the Archbishops, Bishops, Chancellours, &c. in any or all their arbitrary Courts whatsoever, for the whole reign of the two last Kings, King *James* and King *Charles*: a means to make more Christians (if we have not remitted much of our zeale) weary of this Land, were there waies to escape, then were in those times. And would these men be willing to have the complaints of those men and their children whom they shall hereby utterly undoe, lie at their own doors and at the doors of their posterity: may more be recorded in heaven against them and theirs to the third and fourth generation in these or the like expressions? "These are the men, or the children of those men, who only to shew their Authority, and to make the greatest of their Power and Majesty appear, " have put me, my father or my grandfather to this sad dilemma: That I (or they) being thus See Page 2 & 3.
and thus engaged, either must in order to their injunction, promise that, which (in the presence of God I averre it) I judge contrary to such and such former engagements sacred and civil, against the light, and against the peace of mine own Conscience: or if I dissent, though I promise all quiet and peaceable carriage, all faithfullnesse in my place and calling, yea and to act whatsoever I lawfully may upon common known principles to the common good, yea though my dissent be only in such things as are exceeding full of scruple at the best, in waies, acknowledged by those who first acted in them, to be extraordinary and irregular, yet I must be outed of my calling, denied my maintenance, be deprived of my birth-right, the protection of the Laws, a thing usually permitted to Aliens and strangers (yea enemies ofentimes, engaging for their peaceable carriage) and in a word be exposed to the fraud, violence and fury of all men, that whoever shall by force or fraud seize upon or detain my goods and estate, there can be no appeal to the law for me, no plea against him? And will not God arise for the cry of one thus oppressed, and set him in safety (in due time) from him that persecuteth at him? P. 12. 7.

5. Whether will not many, when they shall see the event, and compare things with things, think it a device to undermine and out many painfull, conscientious Ministers, and in proceesse of time (by that time the souldiers want money next) bring them into a *pramissure*, and expose their livings to publike sale: Such Ministers (I say) with other eminent Christians, as sticking to their first principles and Engagements, dissent from the present proceedings; whether I say many will not upon the event conclude, this Engagement principally intended for that purpose?

6. Suppose they in present power had been the men ejected, and those few left in the house had gone on in waies as contrary to their inclinations and consciences: and when they

they had done, compelled the ejected and their party to engage with them, or to say no worse, proposed such conditions as their consciences could in no wise bear: whether would not they have made as much opposition as any now is made, have cried out as loud upon such harsh dealings as any now whatsoever? what end of suing for Toleration, Toleration, Toleration, would there be with them in such a case as this, who cannot in things appertaining to God endure the Scriptures themselves should be binding many of them? And where is that golden rule of our Saviour, *Whatsoever things ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets?* I should now have done with the first branch of this Query, the Conscience and Equity there is for pressing this Engagement, but that methinks, I already hear many enquiring; What then? are all those Oaths, Protections, &c. no longer of value? are they become rotten cords, cancel'd bands, old Almanacks, of no force, vertue or use, from the day of the date of this new Engagement, and for ever? I have been already over-tedious, yet must propound a Question or two, as touching this also

1. Whether in taking the Oaths and Covenants aforesaid, were these our thoughts and purposes? that we were by all these bound to endeavour the preservation of the Privileges and Power of Parliaments, the preservation, honour, &c. of the King and his posterity, &c. and that thus we would do as long as we were overpowered by, or stood in fear of a stronger, or were held play by an equall party, or other the like rubs lay in our way: But if ever we should become Matters of the field, get above all our fears, and having measured, finde our swords the longest; that from thenceforth it should be lawfull for us, and we would depose and behead the King, cut off his posterity, cast out the Lords and Commons too, if they stood in our way? were these our thoughts, what honest man is there whose heart would not have risen against such suggestions? what zealous man but would not (as we say) have spit in the face of him that should have said it? what worse did or could the adverse party in the very height of their mischief and malice affirm? in a word what is there now whereof they have more cause to boast? and for which honest well-meaning Covenanters have more cause to blush and be ashamed? or what could have been done more to the justifying of their cause, then by doing all these things are done?

2. Suppose the Kings party, against whose proceedings the Covenant was principally intended, had prevailed, and having gotten the whole power into their hands, gone on in waies in all appearance directly contrary to the Covenant; should all Covenanters have accounted themselves thereupon wholly dis-engaged, so as to serve the contrary party in any thing; as for instance, suppose the King and Lords should have ejected the Commons, or the King both Lords and Commons, or if the Lords gaining the start, should have deposed and beheaded the King, have ejected the Commons; nay, yet farther and yet nearer the matter in hand, had some few of the Lords not only destroyed the King, put down the house of Commons, but ejected, or at least complyed and acted with those who did eject above 3. parts in four, if not six parts in seven of their own house too, should (I say) any conscientious Covenanters willingly or unwillingly be brought to subscribe hereunto? was there any such intention from the beginning? would he not have been a Delinquent, a Malignant, and what not, that should have put any such sense upon the Covenant?

1. I know it's objected, that the reason is not the same, as if the King or Lords should have done this: because they, viz. the Commons are the peoples Representatives, and receive from them their Authority: But I would fain know where that man dwells that can make this good: that the people committed themselves to such a number of Commons as the Army should chuse? or where may finde him who hath proved the power of this Nation about nine or ten years ago, or any time since, to have been in the people, unlesse these few Commons, and the Army, and they only be the people?

2. Once more, Suppose in all these we had not appeal'd unto God, and they had been only so many civill compacts among men, yet being mutuall obligations of man to man, and

of the two Nations of *England* and *Scotland* each to other : whether may either of the Nations depart from it without the consent of the other, or put other interpretations upon it, then was by both at first agreed upon, at their own pleasure, and to the serving their own turns ? The like may be demanded concerning any party, especially a minor and more inconsiderable party of Engagers, whether they can at pleasure interpret, or reject the Covenant, without, and contrary to the sense and minde of the major part of the Covenanters, making out of it what best may sute with their present conditions.

It's more then time that I proceed now to the 2^d branch of this Query, viz. Whether they in present power are in a prudentiall way necessitated to require the Engagement ? And first by the way, I hope we all grant this : That lawlesse necessity is in it self an unlawful plea : And that this is a maxime of perpetuall verity, That a man is never necessitated to sin. But to the purpose, this necessity or expediency may (as I conceive) be reduced to these 3. heads, their own security, their establishment, and the putting a difference between their friends and their enemies : now in order to these, I shall begge leave to propound a few Queries, and those very brief.

1. As touching that of security, Whether they think they may safely confide in all those who have or shall take the Engagement : or rather whether many of those who having already digested severall Engagements, do greedily swallow up this also, may not sit as loose to them as ever, yea, be some of them as ready to seek their ruine as ever ? nay, whether they have not more cause to stand in fear of many of those, who, for self-ends, as present peace, protection, enjoyment of gain, full offices, &c. do take it, then of those, who out of conscience refuse it ?

2. Whether an Engagement from pious, peaceable, and conscientious men, in these or the like Terms : ^a That they will in all things be true and faithful under this present power, so far as is consistent with former Engagements, might not be enough : yea, and make more for their security, then all Engagements in the world, from those with whom any thing will down, and when they have sworn by all that is sacred, are still ready to cut the throats of those to whom they seemingly swore fealty ?

3. As to Establishment, Whether would it not more tend to their establishment, by all fair waies to win over, so farre as may be, a dissenting party, rather then further to irritate them, especially such a party, who though they are weak and feeble, of no form in the eyes of the world, have no votes in the Courts of Justice upon earth, are yet precious in the sight of God, potent in the high Court of heaven, and mighty with the God of heaven, Certainly it were more agreeable to Christian polity, to the revealed will of God, and their much pretended regard of tender consciences, to entreat such gently, shewing them all possible kindness for their Masters, nay, for their Fathers sake, then to smite their fellow-servants, holding them then fast by the throat, when they are cast down at their feet, ruling with rigour, and lording it over their brethren.

4. Whether it were the practice of this Kingdom in any Princes reign since the reformation, to out-law those popish recusants, who could in no wise be brought to take the Oath of Supremacy, but were presumed by the principles of their Religion to be enemies thereunto : of whose plots and practices against the then powers, *Q. Elizabeth* and *K. James* had in their daies sufficient experience : And do the Ministry and godly people of this Nation, because of their dissenting, deserve worse of this State, then those treacherous and bloudy Papists did of the State then ? I hope it is not come to that.

5. Whether they in present Power can possibly think of involving the people into more and more tying Engagements, then those by which they were obliged to the late King ? And if, when he among other mis-carriages, past the bounds of moderation, these obligations and ties could not secure, establish, and preserve him, how can they expect that this or any other, if they break out into the like exorbitances, shall them ?

^a And is not this as much as we can with a safe conscience give : and indeed more then we owe them ? Can they desire more, or will they *ex professo* have that which is inconsistent with former Engagements.

6. Whether

6. Whether there be any thing more ominous to a Power, then the straining it to the highest. And whether this were not the main, if not the only thing that overthrew the King and the Bishops? Examine your own experience, and search other Histories.

7. To the third thing, Whether will this prove a distinguishing note, a means to separate between the precious and the vile, between fast friends and devouring enemies? or rather is it not likely to bring a snare upon the truly consciencious, a blot and black mark, and to free the offender, a way to have implacable, inveterate, and known enemies, because of their present forced compliance, to go for fast, because fained friends: and on the other side, those who have given, and still are ready to give all the assistance they lawfully may, to be reckoned the only enemies?

I have yet one thing more to propound, and that is, whether they in present power are not bound in conscience, equity and prudence, when such considerations as these are offered to take notice of them, and either punctually and plainly to clear them, or else to desist urging what they see mens consciences upon good grounds either utterly against, or at least staggered and puzzled at?

Lastly, If none of all these and the like considerations prevaile, Whether there may not some lighter penalty be awarded?

And thus I have done with the first Query: I should now proceed in like manner to enlarge the 2^d, viz. Whether the people be not bound in conscience to refuse this Engagement? but this hath so near affinity with the former, and is so involved in it, that whatsoever tends to the resolution of that, it rightly applied will answer this also, --- *Muraro nomine de se*, &c. change the title and the relations, and thou art the man we have talk'd of all this while. Go back therefore, and discreetly and impartially examine thy self according to the interrogatories propounded, and when thou hast done consider yet further.

1. Whether, the premises well weighed, there be not more cause of refusall then engaging? and if so, whether it be not farre better and much more desirable to suffer the utmost that the most potent, enraged and most resolved of men can inflict or threaten; then by breach, wilfull, deliberate and advised breach of Covenant, to provoke the most high God to whom thou hast lifted up thy hand, to wound thine own conscience, to dishonour God, bring a scandall upon Religion, a reproach upon profession, to shame Professors and make them stink in the nostrils of the world; to open the mouths of blasphemers, to give them cause of insulting and much glorying, to weaken the hands of some, to harden others in their perverse waies, laying a stumbling block before many of thy brethren; lastly, to give thy self up to that slavish baseness of spirit, as to be ready to relinquish wholsome long retained principles, to swear, unswear, forswear, giving up thy conscience to serve the lust and pleasure of any prevailing party?

2. Suppose the Army, or any prevailing party thereof, Levellers or else, should eject the men in present power and thrust in others, throw down this Government and erect another (suppose of King Lords and Commons, or some, or one, or any of these, for who can say what men will do?) quite opposite to this, whether art thou ready with the same cheerfulness to engage against this and for that, be it what it will be? thou maist turn thy coat so oftentill thou maist be ashamed to wear it any side outward.

In fine, let us lay seriously to heart that abundant breach of faith among us: for which the Lord is displeased, the godly grieved, the Land doth, must, and will mourne, of which the world taketh notice, and it will not be long, if it be not already, ere they that speak in Proverbs, will promise what they intend never to perform, and aver what they know to be false, *sic Anglicana*, upon the faith of an English-man.